FINDINGS

IMPROVEMENTS IN ELECTORAL PROCESS CREDIBILITY

Overall, stakeholders positively assessed the work of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in managing Nigeria’s federal and state elections and recognized improvements in the areas of:

• voter registration;
• accreditation of voters;
• logistics management;
• voter education; and
• operations and logistics.

Many also appreciated INEC’s ability to introduce new, complex electoral technologies on a massive scale.

Stakeholders appreciated INEC’s efforts to engage women, youth, and persons with disabilities (PWDs), also improving perceived credibility. These efforts include:

• INEC’s identification of these voters through voter registration data;
• publishing voter education materials in braille, Easy Read, and other accessible formats; and
• introducing tactile ballot guides and other assistive instruments.

However, respondents indicated low levels of satisfaction with INEC’s efforts to accommodate PWDs, which is perhaps indicative of recognition of the scale of the problems facing PWDs in voting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expert Satisfaction with Accommodations for PWDs</th>
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<tr>
<td>NATIONAL</td>
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<tr>
<td>Voter registration process</td>
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<tr>
<td>(INEC made adequate accommodations for PWDs)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adequacy of voting accommodations for PWDs</td>
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<td>(e.g., tactile ballots and braille guides)</td>
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<td>Treatment of PWDs by INEC officials at polling units in the 2019 general elections</td>
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ONGOING INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL CHALLENGES

Stakeholders pointed to numerous challenges that continue to threaten electoral credibility in Nigeria. These consist of internal challenges affecting INEC’s operations and management, largely stemming from its relatively stagnant bureaucratic structure:

• inefficiencies;
• redundancies;
• unclear lines of control and responsibility; and
• nepotism.

Stakeholders also cited key external challenges, that are in many respects beyond the control of Election Management Bodies (EMBs), such as:

• the failure of the National Assembly and the president to agree on legal reforms;
• party primary processes;
• behavior of political parties, service providers, and courts;
• rampant vote-buying;
• electoral violence and insecurity; and
• the investigation of electoral offenses.

Perceptions of State Independent Electoral Commissions’ (SIECs’) credibility and local council elections were lower due to SIECs’ lack of independence, funding challenges, and the irregularity of the election cycle at the local level, which were consistently cited among the most fundamental and pressing problems facing these institutions.

While INEC plays a role in planning and coordinating electoral security, the performance of police and other security providers is likely more relevant in determining voters’ perceptions of the voting environment. Comparing expert levels of satisfaction with the performance of several institutions involved in election security, the lowest levels of satisfaction are with the Nigeria Police Force and the Army.

1 INEC was formed in 1998; however, the staffing has largely been in place since as far back as 1987 under the predecessor National Election Commission. Few changes in organizational structure have occurred since its formation.
ELECTORAL MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION WITH OTHER INSTITUTIONS

In interviews and surveys, stakeholders believed that INEC is effectively managing relationships with external institutions that support election processes and continuing to improve its responsiveness to operations and logistics problems. Experts believed relationships with other institutions were effective, with the exception of the National Orientation Agency. Relationships with National Youth Service Corps and the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) ranked highest.

Effectiveness of Institutional Partnerships

Expert Satisfaction with Institutions in Ensuring Election Security

ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

The Cloudburst Group conducted an assessment for USAID/Nigeria to understand and assess the performance of INEC and other institutions in Nigeria over the past decade, with a focus on the period corresponding to USAID’s Support for Electoral Reforms Project (SERP). This assessment took place from June-October 2020, and included a thorough desk review and remote field research, including both interviews of key informants, surveys of national- and state-level elections experts, and analysis of existing International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) public opinion survey data.

The assessment (see full findings report) answers four key research questions:

• How have the Independent National Electoral Commission’s and State Independent Electoral Commissions’ management and administration of elections since 2007 impacted electoral integrity? (Summarized above.)
• What investments in INEC, SIECs, and other stakeholders made by SERP have been the most effective in improving electoral integrity and the quality of elections in Nigeria? (Summarized in “USAID / Nigeria Activities and Opportunities.”)
• What are the opportunities for USAID/Nigeria to invest strategically in election management and administration moving forward? (Summarized in “USAID / Nigeria Activities and Opportunities.”)